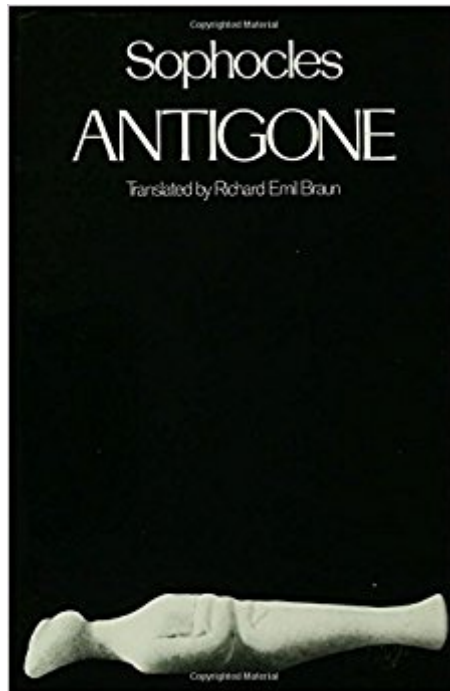




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Antigone (Greek Tragedy In New Translations)



Synopsis

Based on the conviction that only translators who write poetry themselves can properly recreate the celebrated and timeless tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the Greek Tragedy in New Translations series offers new translations that go beyond the literal meaning of the Greek in order to evoke the poetry of the originals. The series seeks to recover the entire extant corpus of Greek tragedy, quite as though the ancient tragedians wrote in the English of our own time. Under the editorship of Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro, each of these volumes includes a critical introduction, commentary on the text, full stage directions, and a glossary of the mythical and geographical references in the plays. This finely-tuned translation of Sophocles' *Antigone* by Richard Emil Braun, both a distinguished poet and a professional scholar-critic, offers, in lean, sinewy verse and lyrics of unusual intensity, an interpretation informed by exemplary scholarship and critical insight. Braun presents an *Antigone* not marred by excessive sentimentality or pietistic attitudes. His translation underscores the extraordinary structural symmetry and beauty of Sophocles' design by focusing on the balanced and harmonious view of tragically opposed wills that makes the play so moving. Unlike the traditionally gentle and pious protagonist opposed to a brutal and villainous Creon, Braun's *Antigone* emerges as a true Sophoclean heroine--with all the harshness and even hubris, as well as pathos and beauty, that Sophoclean heroism requires. Braun also reveals a Creon as stubbornly "principled" as *Antigone*, instead of simply the arrogant tyrant of conventional interpretations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Researching translations is never an easy task, and in this case, where you'll have to search on for the title and the translator to find what you want, it's particularly difficult. Here's what I've found by comparing several editions:

1. David Grene translation: Seems to be accurate, yet not unwieldy as such. My pick. Language is used precisely, but not to the point where it's barely in English.
2. Fitts/Fitzgerald translation: Excellent as well, though a little less smooth than the Grene one. Certainly not a bad pick.
3. Fagles translation: Beautiful. Not accurate. If you are looking for the smoothest English version, there's no doubt that this is it. That said, because he is looser with the translation, some ideas might be lost. For instance, in *Antigone*, in the beginning, *Antigone* discusses how law compels her to bury her brother despite Creon's edict. In Fagles, the "law" concept is lost in "military honors" when discussing the burial of Eteocles. This whole notion of obeying positive law or natural law is very important, but you wouldn't know it from Fagles. In Grene, for example, it is translated to "lawful rites."
4. Gibbons and Segal: Looks great, but right now the book has only *Antigone* (and not the rest of the trilogy) and costs almost 3x as much. I'll pass. But, from a cursory review, I'm impressed with their work.
5. MacDonald: This edition received some good write-ups, but I wasn't able to do a direct passage-to-passage comparison.
6. Woodruff: NO, NO, NO. Just NO. It's so colloquial it makes me gag. Very accessible, but the modernization of the language is just so extreme as to make it almost laughable. You don't get any sense of the power of language in the play.

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"*Antigone*" is that kind of literary work that invites opposing views. The state and the individual, the duties to family and country, the boundaries of legitimate government and the extent of personal choice, are all elements that find a voice in this play, an extraordinary gift of Western culture to the world. The young and stubborn *Antigone* finds herself breaking the law that her uncle, the old and stubborn *Kreon*, has enacted. This is *Oedipus*' family, so there must be bloodshed. The conflict develops out of the vengeful and, ultimately foolish law that *Kreon* has come up with, which denies burial rituals to one of *Antigone*'s brothers (*Polyneices*) because he had sided with foreigners and made war against his city. *Antigone* claims that Justice (*dikē*) tells her to care for her brother's body in spite of his treason. This is what *Kreon*, blind with hatred, cannot see. Just as *Oedipus*, and even worse, *Kreon* imagines conspiracies where there are none, and is convinced that the entire city is seething with traitors waiting for a signal to bring him down. With such a state of mind, he charges against *Antigone*, and she is very much her father's daughter: she will not bow before her uncle although the consequences are grave. *Kreon* represents the state, but a state whose laws are capricious at best, and simply bad and hurtful at worst. *Antigone* is not easy to love or like: she is bent on following a path that will lead to her death, welcoming such a release from the terrible burden of being who she is: daughter of her brother *Oedipus* and granddaughter of her mother *Jocasta*. But *Antigone*'s own prickly character makes her struggle all the more admirable, since it is so difficult to like her. It would have been relatively easy to create a soft, misunderstood heroine who dies for her convictions.

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